DBH
Division of Behavioral Health

Missouri Department of Mental Health
Division of Behavioral Health

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Rick Gowdy
Division Director

Preventing Overdose Deaths with Naloxone

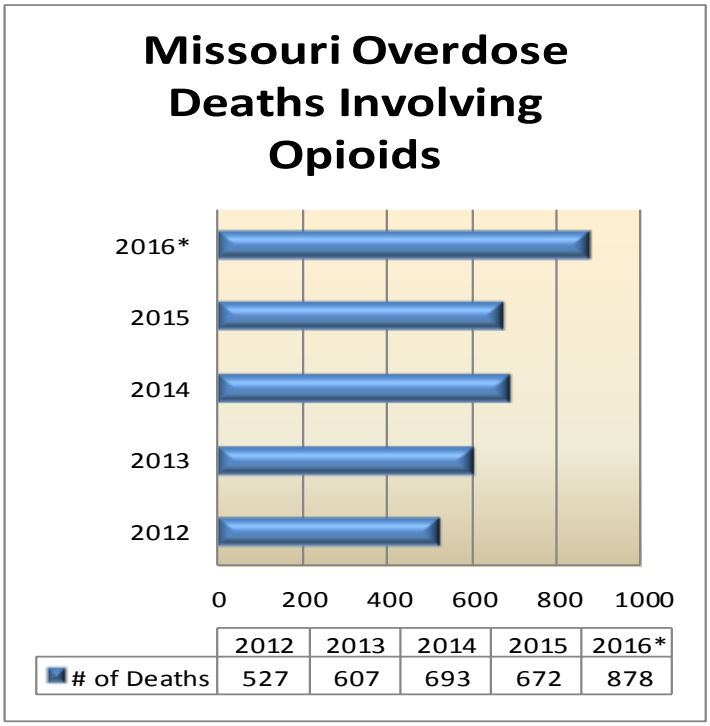
Preventing Overdose Deaths: Naloxone is a medication used to counter the effects of an opioid overdose. Use of opioids like heroin and fentanyl increase the risk of overdose death because these drugs can depress respiration. Risk is greater if opioids are used in combination with alcohol. Naloxone can counter the effects of an overdose by restoring central nervous system and respiratory functioning. The medication is administered by nasal spray or injection. In Missouri, pharmacies may dispense naloxone without requiring a prescription. Missouri law also requires that any person who administers naloxone to immediately contact emergency personnel. This is important because there may be withdraw symptoms and other health complications that require immediate medical attention. In addition, the effects of naloxone may wear off before that of the opioids and the person might go into overdose again. Naloxone can be effective only when the overdose involves opioids. The medication is not effective when the overdose is due to other substances like cocaine or alcohol. To prevent future overdose events and impairment due to opioid addiction, linkage to substance treatment is essential.

Signs of an Opioid Overdose (SAMHSA, 2016):

- *Loss of consciousness*
- *Pinpoint pupils*
- *Breathing problems—breathing may become slow, erratic, or stop altogether*
- *Nausea or vomiting*
- *Blue/gray tint to fingernails and/or lips*

Research on Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution Programs:

- *Programs can be cost-effective (Coffin & Sullivan, 2013).*
- *Programs can increase knowledge and skills to improve response to overdose events (Green et al., 2008).*
- *Programs have not been found to increase opioid use (Doe-Simkins et al., 2014).*



**Data for 2016 is preliminary.*
Data Source: Missouri Bureau of Vital Statistics, Department of Health and Senior Services

The MO-HOPE Project: The Missouri Opioid/Heroin Overdose Prevention and Education (MO-HOPE) project is an initiative to increase overdose education and the distribution of naloxone to first responders, health care providers, substance use treatment programs, social service organizations, and other members of the community. The project is funded through a five-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The MO-HOPE Project is a partnership between the Missouri Department of Mental Health, the Missouri Institute for Mental Health (MIMH), University of Missouri—St. Louis, and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (NCADA). A needs assessment was conducted to identify high need areas of the state. Target areas demonstrating high need include St. Louis and surrounding counties which have seen increased heroin activity and overdose deaths in recent years. As of May 22, 2017, the MO-HOPE Project has conducted 27 overdose prevention trainings in which 871 emergency responders and others were trained. Thus far, 1,610 naloxone doses have been distributed. Trained individuals have reported subsequently using naloxone in 20 overdose events. Over the course of the grant, the MO-HOPE project will train at least 3,600 individuals and distribute 36,000 doses of naloxone. MIMH will conduct an evaluation of the project. For more information on the MO-HOPE Project, visit www.mohopeproject.org.